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Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
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UK



British Journal of Educational Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rbje20>

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Published online: 31 Oct 2013.

To cite this article: Daniel Mucinskas & Howard Gardner (2013) Educating for Good Work: From Research to Practice, British Journal of Educational Studies, 61:4, 453-470, DOI: [10.1080/00071005.2013.829210](https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2013.829210)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2013.829210>

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EDUCATING FOR GOOD WORK: FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

by DANIEL MUCINSKAS and HOWARD GARDNER, *Harvard Graduate School of Education*

ABSTRACT: Launched in 1995, the GoodWork Project is a long-term, multi-site effort to understand the nature of good work across the professional landscape and to promote its achievement by relevant groups of students and professionals. In this essay, the authors review the goals and methods of the initial research project and its most salient findings. They describe the GoodWork Toolkit, a versatile instrument that consists of actual dilemmas faced by professionals, along with exercises designed to make the issues salient to those who use the Toolkit. Introduced as well is a system of classification of the dilemmas, in terms of their applicability across the professional landscape; and a review of the range of educational settings in which GoodWork materials have been utilized.

Keywords: professional education, professional ethics, ethical dilemmas, GoodWork Project

1. INTRODUCTION

When things are going well, we tend to take the situation for granted. In the United States, Britain, and presumably other countries as well, the professions were thriving for much of the twentieth century. Writing in the early 1960s, in a possibly hyperbolic statement, Kenneth Lynn claimed: ‘Everywhere in American life, the professions are triumphant’ (Lynn, 1963, p. 649). As he (and other commentators) saw it, lawyers, physicians, university teachers and other individuals credentialed as professionals were able to carry out their work comfortably. They were well trained, reasonably compensated, lightly regulated, respected in their community and trusted to police themselves and to make complex decisions in a judicious manner under conditions of uncertainty. To be sure, in the United States at the middle of the last century, their ranks were still largely restricted to white males of middle-class background. But thanks to the civil rights movement, the women’s movement and other powerful trends of the 1960s and thereafter, membership in the professions was soon to be broadened.

Thirty years later, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and William Damon and Howard Gardner saw it, the situation within the professions was already disturbingly different. On both sides of the Atlantic, market ways of thinking had become dominant. Increasingly it was assumed that supply and demand should be

principal arbiters of which professional services were available and to whom they were available. Whether it was legal services, higher education or (in the case of the United States) medical attention, those who had ample financial resources were assured of choice of services, while those who were indigent or had few resources had to settle for second-class services, if they were attended to at all. The financial fiascos of 2001 (Enron, Arthur Andersen) and 2008 (Lehman Brothers, AIG, the Royal Bank of Scotland) had yet to occur, but the undermining of the accounting and banking sectors had clearly begun or had perhaps already moved into higher gear. And the question arose as to whether professionals even needed credentialing; if so, how and by whom should they be credentialed; whether, indeed, George Bernard Shaw may have been correct when he quipped that professions were ‘a conspiracy against the laity.’

2. THE GOODWORK PROJECT

In response to these and other conditions, Csikszentmihalyi, Damon, and Gardner embarked on the GoodWork Project (now one constituent of the broader The Good Project). While it took a while for us to define our research question with precision, we eventually arrived at the following formulation:

- How do individuals who want to do good work in the professions succeed or fail at a time when things are changing very quickly, our whole sense of time and space is being upended by technologies, markets are very powerful and – importantly – there no longer exist counter-forces that can modulate or mediate the effects of the market?

To be sure, there had already been considerable analysis of what it takes to be a first-rate professional (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001; Hughes, 1963; Lieberman, 1956; Parsons, 1968); but earlier analysts had not been struck by the growing fragility of at least some of the professions. We would not claim that we were especially prescient; but it is clear that the question we posed in the 1990s has not lost its urgency, and indeed may be even more pressing today.

For the decade from 1995 to 2005, empirical research was our primary activity. With a research team, eventually encompassing five universities spread around the country, we carried out in-depth interviews with over 1200 professionals drawn from nine different sectors. The workers ranged in age – some were essentially talented novices, others were retired ‘trustees’ – but the bulk were veteran workers in their 40s, 50s, or 60s. In each case, we spoke at length with the worker, probing his or her goals, principal strategies for achieving these goals, ways of navigating around obstacles, history of mentoring and, importantly, in which way(s) he or she saw the profession changing in the years to come.

We chose to study professionals who were recommended by knowledgeable observers for their excellence and their reflectiveness, but we could not vouch in each case for their degree of professionalism. We did expect that, even if our

interview subjects themselves were flawed (as most of us are), they could provide insight into what it meant to be a good worker and how good work was most likely to be achieved in the professional domain in question.

While we received insights and drew conclusions on many topics, the study yielded two principal findings (Gardner, 2010; Gardner *et al.*, 2001; for additional references, see The Good Project¹). First, good work consists of three principal ingredients. Good work is technically *excellent*: the worker knows his or her stuff and keeps up with changes in the professional landscape. The worker is *engaged*: he or she enjoys the work, looks forward to it and would commend that line of work to a promising young person. Finally, the worker is *ethical*: the worker recognizes ethical dilemmas, reflects on them, seeks the advice of others, tries to do the right thing and, when unsuccessful, seeks to learn from mistakes and to do better the next time around. In the ideal, the good worker synthesizes these three components. As we have envisioned it (see Figure 1), good work consists of three intertwined components, which we have termed ‘ENA.’ While it is better to have one or two traits than none, the ideal good worker is excellent *and* engaged *and* ethical.

As for our second conclusion: good work is easier to achieve when the various stakeholders are in broad agreement about the goals and means of the profession – a condition that we have termed ‘alignment.’ This finding stood out with particular clarity because of the contrasting findings emanating from the first two professions that we elected to study. In the late 1990s, genetics was a well-aligned profession:



Figure 1. A model of GoodWork: the three strands of ‘ENA.’

professional scientists, funders, the government and the general public all sought longer and healthier lives; there were few obstacles bedeviling the worker. In sharp contrast, journalism was already seen as massively misaligned. Reporters wanted to get the stories right, editors wanted deadlines to be met, publishers wanted to have ever larger profits and the general public sought sensationalism. This non-alignment was already apparent, even though the disruptive features of the digital media had yet to manifest themselves fully. Indeed, one-third of the journalists whom we interviewed expressed a desire to leave the profession; none of the geneticists did.

It should be noted that alignment is not a guarantor of good work. Indeed, freeloaders can take advantage of an apparently well-aligned situation. Conversely, non-alignment can stimulate important innovations – we have seen this situation vividly in the case of new forms of journalism or, for that matter, new ways of enrolling and training teachers. Still, other things being equal, most workers find it easier to operate efficiently and ethically when the value of their work is widely acknowledged.

By 2006, our empirical work with adult workers was completed and many of our findings had already been published (for an up-to-date list of publications, see note 1). As committed social scientists, we might well have moved on to other areas of research. Yet two factors stimulated us to shift our focus from the collection and analysis of social scientific data to more active efforts in education. The first factor, already alluded to, was the steadily deteriorating state and status of the professions. It was becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate lawyers (and especially corporate lawyers) from businessmen; bankers and auditors were widely seen as complicit in exploitation of ordinary customers; and, especially in the United States, physicians were becoming workers paid by the number of procedures recommended and supervised by managers drawn primarily from the ranks of business. Unless we were willing to accept these trends, which seemed deeply troubling to us, something needed to be done.

The second factor emerged from a study that we had done in the United States of highly capable individuals in their teens and twenties who had already elected a particular profession as young workers (Fischman *et al.*, 2004). These young persons – the proverbial ‘best and brightest’ – understood the meaning of good work; most of them admired it, and some seemed committed to carry out it out. But often – far too often – we heard them in effect voice the same lament:

Our peers are ambitious; they are cutting corners. We want to be successful, wealthy, and famous. We are not content to sacrifice our own chances for success on the altar of ethics. Someday, when we have made it, we will be good workers, we will hire good workers, and we will set a good example. But for now, we want a ‘pass;’ we want to be permitted to carry out compromised work.

Our research teams at our respective universities were disturbed by this state of affairs. And so in a number of ways, on each of our campuses, we have undertaken efforts to counter the current situation and to enhance understanding and pursuit

of good work (as examples, see Berg *et al.*, 2003; Bronk, 2010; Damon, 2009; Nakamura *et al.*, 2009). In the remainder of this essay, we outline our own efforts at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, via the creation of a GoodWork Toolkit, to educate for good work. While our research and our educational efforts cut across the professional spectrum, we will for the purposes of exposition begin with a pair of examples from journalism.

3. THE GOOD WORK TOOLKIT

Background

Every reflective professional faces ethical dilemmas. A case in point comes from the recent experiences of Nicholas Kristof, an award-winning journalist from *The New York Times* who has reflected on the dilemmas he has encountered in the course of his work. In one instance, while reporting from a village in Darfur, Kristof noted that the villagers began to flee, presumably to avoid being massacred by the Janjaweed militia. Kristof stayed to interview the few people still remaining in the village, but his interpreter finally warned him that the militia was fast approaching. While Kristof would have presumably been ransomed for money, the interpreter and driver would have almost surely been killed. The three finally decided to leave the village. In subsequent reflection, Kristof realized that in the process of attempting to do his job well, he had been putting others at risk. He also realized that if it appeared that he was taking one side in the war, he might have been compromising his role as journalist; and if that was the case, it was possible that other reporters, from the *Times* and perhaps even from other papers, might have been expelled from the country. The correct decision was far from clear.

In the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in China in 1989, Kristof again found himself in a difficult situation. A participant in the demonstrations who was wanted by the Chinese government approached him and a colleague, seeking help to emigrate to the United States and escape his likely punishment in China. While *The New York Times* could have been barred from the country for aiding a political criminal, Kristof and his colleague did help the man to flee. While Kristof believes this was the *right* decision, he also describes it as one of the most *unprofessional* decisions he has ever made (Facing History and Ourselves, 2011; Shorenstein Center, 2013).

In our terms, these situations pit ‘neighborly morality’ against the ‘ethics of roles.’ As a neighbor, one tries to help out those who are in trouble or in need – and this would certainly include individuals who are in harm’s way. However, the role of the professional entails the capacity to behave in a disinterested manner (Gardner, in press). Reporters are supposed to describe what is happening on the ground; they are not supposed to be partisan or to become part of the story. This type of situation, pitting the empathy one feels for others against the need to perform one’s job in fidelity to professional standards codes, epitomizes the kinds of dilemmas that arise repeatedly at the workplace.

Over the course of our decade-long research, we assembled dozens, if not hundreds, of similar cases in which workers – typically drawn from the ranks of the professions – encountered complex and difficult situations and sought to deal with them as best they could. The cases provided us with a rich array of dilemmas in which workers grappled with conflicting concerns that oftentimes pitted career responsibilities against competing ethical and moral considerations. Such conflicts cut to the core of how we defined good work in terms of excellence, ethics and engagement. To return to our prototypical example, not only was Nicholas Kristof torn between feeling for his fellow human beings and the requirements of responsible journalism, but his own missionary zeal to publicize violations of human rights could have also got in the way of his role as a disinterested reporter. The dilemmas that professionals faced and then relayed to us in our interviews threw into sharp relief the questions of what good work is, and, in contrast, when work becomes compromised.

Use of Dilemmas

As we began the planning stage of implementing the practical lessons learned from our research, we decided to build our intervention upon the kinds of professional dilemmas that were faced by our subjects. The posing of dilemmas is a well-established practice in both research and intervention. In the sphere of moral–ethical development, Piaget (1932) was among the first researchers to pose such dilemmas to young subjects; some decades later, Kohlberg (1958) placed the practice at the center of moral development. Kohlberg was less interested in the ways that the dilemmas were resolved than in the kind of reasoning displayed by subjects in coming to a conclusion or recommendation. The Piaget–Kohlberg-style dilemmas have been used and revised in numerous ways, allowing researchers to look at cultural differences (Shweder *et al.*, 1987), gender differences (Gilligan, 1982) and the relation between conventions and principles (Turiel, 1983). Kohlbergian dilemmas have also been streamlined and subjected to precise scoring, by the work of Colby (Colby and Kohlberg, 1987) and Rest (1979). More recently, probing the difference between intuitive as opposed to reasoned responses to moral dilemmas, many researchers have used the ‘trolley problem’ (Foot, 1967); as with the Piaget–Kohlberg dilemmas, this type of problem has been investigated with reference to demographic, cultural and even neurological differences (Greene *et al.*, 2001; Hauser, 2006; Young *et al.*, 2007).

While most of the work in these traditions has been carried out without regard to the work situation of the participating subjects, there have been a few efforts to create and pose dilemmas that are specific to particular professions. Most of these efforts occur in professional school environments involving students in training for a single profession; the students in these studies respond to dilemmas framed for their specific professional environment. For example, in engineering, there have been attempts to measure student responses to ethical dilemmas in order to assess the need for more probing discussions of morality among future engineers (Shuman *et al.*, 2004). In dentistry, dilemmas describing on-the-job scenarios have

been created and used in classrooms in order to strengthen the moral awareness and reasoning of dental students (Bebeau, 2007).

Our Approach

The approach that we have taken derives, broadly speaking, from the Piaget–Kohlberg tradition. There are three key distinctions: our dilemmas arise principally from the workplace, and in particular the working experiences of professionals across an array of professions; rather than being hypothetical, these dilemmas were all gleaned from actual conversations with our research participants; and, for the most part, the dilemmas are posed as part of a facilitated discussion in groups, rather than presented individually to subjects as in an interview or by some kind of survey instrument.

Since 2006 our colleagues have created, developed and repeatedly refined a GoodWork Toolkit (Barendsen and Fischman, 2007, in press). The Toolkit is an educational curriculum that is built upon short, vivid vignettes from a wide variety of professional spheres, including science, law, medicine and higher education (among others), which bring to life the kinds of dilemmas that are faced by workers in various fields. Since the Toolkit is often used with young people, some of the vignettes feature youths who find themselves in ethical quandaries. To cite one example of a standard Toolkit dilemma, Debbie is a young journalist who works actively as the editor of her school newspaper. Debbie's grandfather was also a journalist; she has wanted to become involved in the field since she was young, and she believes her role is to 'effect positive change' and serve others while also reaching as broad an audience as possible. She expresses concern about the damage that negative stories and invasion of privacy can have on their subjects and has a personal philosophy to do good.

The tension between Debbie's desire to report yet not to exploit comes to a head one day. During a meeting for prospective students at her private school, a current student accuses the administration of ignoring rapes on campus, an allegation that attracts much attention. Debbie is torn: she feels pressure to report the biggest story of the year in her newspaper, but she does not want to attract negative attention to her school community for as-yet-unproven allegations. In the end, she publishes a short article giving just the known 'bare facts.' Consequently, Debbie feels unsatisfied. She knows that she could have probed more deeply; and she worries that justice has not been served.

Whether the vignette about Debbie is posed to students, teachers or working journalists, the same issues are brought up; there are no 'simple solutions' to the dilemmas and problems that Debbie confronts. Discussion can revolve around Debbie's responsibilities in various roles in her life, how the participants themselves would have responded to the situation if placed in the story, and how censorship can occur at the professional level. Readers have the opportunity to participate in a role-playing game found in the Toolkit in which they assume the point of view of an imaginary parent, student, teacher or other character from Debbie's vignette.

4. THE GOODWORK TOOLKIT: STRUCTURE AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

The Toolkit is organized into eight sections styled as thematic chapters, each with a particular focus; chapters can be sampled from or completed in any order. Each chapter begins with a statement of targeted educational objectives and then includes a handful of related vignettes. For example, one chapter of the Toolkit focuses on the role of responsibilities in performing work; the goals of this chapter are to identify one’s own working responsibilities, to explore how those responsibilities relate to standards and to other people, and to consider ways to encourage responsible behavior. A typical vignette in this chapter involves a labor union activist who must cross a picket line as a part of her participation in an economic conference, resulting in an internal conflict between the responsibility she feels to uphold social justice and her responsibility as an entrepreneur being recognized at the forum. Every vignette is furthermore accompanied by discussion questions that are meant to be discussed in groups; in the case of the labor union activist, questions include ‘What alternative choices might [the protagonist] have made?’ and ‘Was [the protagonist] disloyal in her choice?’

In addition to the vignettes, every chapter in the Toolkit concludes with a set of activities that attempt to deepen understanding of the main issues presented by the dilemmas. To continue with the chapter on responsibilities, a ‘Codes of Ethics’ research activity asks participants to consider the International Code of Ethics in relation to the dilemmas they have read and to evaluate and/or create a code of ethics for their own school or profession. A second role-playing assignment asks groups to create short interview skits based on the conflict that one of the vignette protagonists faces. Last, an individual writing assignment requires participants to think about their own responsibilities and to describe an occasion when they themselves felt torn between conflicting responsibilities.

Table 1 illustrates the basic structure of each of the Toolkit’s eight chapters. Echoed throughout each chapter is a focus on ethical considerations in situations where the ‘right path’ is far from self-evident. In the aggregate, the vignettes and activities from each chapter form a free-standing and adaptable curriculum that can be drawn on to educate participants and spur thought about issues of good work.

TABLE 1: Structure of the GoodWork Toolkit

Section of Toolkit chapter	Purpose
Chapter title	Expresses the overall theme of a chapter’s content
Objectives	Outlines the chapter’s educational purposes and goals, which participants should be thinking about throughout
Cases	Describes complex ethical dilemmas related to chapter goals in three or four vignettes, each with discussion questions
Activities	Facilitates deeper understanding through role-playing, writing, value-sorting, research and group collaboration exercises

The Toolkit was created with several goals in mind. As mentioned, our study of young workers showed us that today's adolescents frequently feel that performing 'bad' or 'compromised' work is acceptable. We thus recognized the need to educate future professionals (current students) from an early age about the kinds of issues that are certain to arise in any variety of work. Furthermore, in order to reach as many people as possible, the Toolkit was designed to be far-reaching in its flexibility: it can be used among a group of seasoned lawyers in a two-day seminar as easily as among middle-school students in a social studies class. As a pliable, cross-professional instrument, the Toolkit has been used across a wide range of audiences. Finally, the Toolkit is meant to raise general questions about how to lead one's own life with respect to the concerns of family, friends, colleagues at work, and the broader community.

From our interviews with research participants, we learned that unless individuals are given the time, space and opportunity to think about important issues, we cannot expect the work habits of individuals to develop in a healthy manner. Accordingly, by using the Toolkit, the following processes take place (Barendsen and Fischman, *in press*):

- (1) Individuals come to understand how complex, often ambiguous ideas relate to their own lives by first thinking through the situations of others and then reflecting on implications for their own lives.
- (2) Individuals build their understanding of excellence, ethics and personal meaning in their own work by engaging in intentional reflection.
- (3) Ethical reasoning skills are necessary, but not sufficient for ethical action. Individuals need to experience what it feels like to be in an ethically-challenging situation, and to experiment with strategies that they might utilize in the future.

To elaborate, the use of dilemmas guides audiences toward self-reflection – which, optimally, allows for a deeper awareness of the meaning of good work and a fuller scrutiny of one's own choices. By examining judgments that others have made, participants have the opportunity both to reflect alone and to talk with others about options, pros and cons, strategies, corrective methods and the accumulation of relevant experiences. In this way, the professional dilemmas in the Toolkit push the audience to engage in introspection and focus on the application of good work principles to conditions that promise to be encountered in daily working life.

Once self-reflection has occurred and connections have been made to the participant's own present or future working life, the Toolkit takes each participant one step further. Because the materials in the Toolkit are diverse, encompassing varied themes relevant to any number of professional and even non-professional environments, participants come to appreciate the critical place that good work occupies not just for oneself or one's immediate colleagues but also for society as a whole (Barendsen and Fischman, 2007). Put differently, 'good work' is not

simply a challenge for a single individual or a single profession; it presents a transcendent set of problems and is unlikely to be achieved unless there are concerted group efforts. We capture this thought in an oft-cited quotation from anthropologist Margaret Mead: 'Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.'

5. THE TOOLKIT THROUGH A PROFESSION-SPECIFIC LENS

As discussed, the bulk of the Toolkit is a heterogeneous assortment of dilemmas drawn from the lives of professionals working in a range of sectors at different stages in their careers. While the GoodWork Toolkit can be implemented in order from start to finish, it serves equally well as a library of materials from which one has the ability to select the most pertinent and useful vignettes for one's purposes. In what follows, we present our initial effort to parse out the vignettes in ways that can serve various constituencies.

Vignettes Specific to Single Professions

The first grouping involves dilemmas pertaining to a single career. The vignettes in this category describe situations in which a member of an established profession faces a troublesome predicament that is peculiar to the profession in question and would not translate or transfer easily to other fields.

A fitting illustration concerns a television journalist named Carol, who works as a co-anchor for a news program in a large American city. Carol becomes dismayed at the direction that her station is taking when a controversial talk show host is hired as a new commentator. As she sees it, this move is simply a cynical attempt to boost ratings at any cost by featuring trivial, sensationalized reports. After pondering her options, she demonstrates her commitment to journalistic integrity and excellence by resigning from her post with a public announcement and moving to another network, where she begins her own investigative journalism program focusing on local issues. This vignette is seen as journalism specific because of the peculiar problem of broadcast ratings – a close analogy does not present itself in other professions.

Another example in this category is the case of Steven, a professor at a university. Steven has a passion for education and believes in high standards; his teaching is valued by his students, who recognize his commitment to their personal and academic growth. Yet, when his high standards translate into tough (albeit fair) grading, his students raise objections, contending that their lower grades will keep them from gaining scholarships and admission to post-college institutions. Steven himself feels conflicted about the grades that he gives; he does not want to compromise his principles but feels he may be putting his students at a disadvantage. This vignette has specificity to the educational field; a grade given at one time for one course can have consequences that color one's future prospects in academia.

Vignettes Specific to Groups of Professions

A second category of vignettes involves those related to groups of professions dealing with similar constraints or responsibilities. Vignettes in this category share a central motif or technical element that cut across a subset of the professions.

As an illustration, several Toolkit vignettes focus on the responsibility of certain professionals to serve specific clients. In one case, Linda, a nurse, provides medical care to homeless patients. Drawing on her own childhood experiences, particularly her mother's empathy for others, Linda strives to do everything she can to help those less fortunate than herself. When she becomes invested in helping an immigrant man who later tragically drowns, Linda goes so far as to make his funeral arrangements. Ultimately, Linda comes to the conclusion that she cannot go to such extremes by over-empathizing with patients; she needs a better balance between her personal and professional lives. While Linda is a nurse, her story seems equally relevant to others who serve clients in need, such as physicians, teachers and social workers – the so-called 'helping professions.'

Although it entails a bit more of a stretch than the first grouping, we find it reasonable to group Linda's vignette with others that entail responsibility to clients. Consider Gail, a lawyer with a passion for helping the defenseless. At one point in her career, she decides not to represent an upper-middle class woman charged of swindling the elderly out of money because such a defense would compromise her personal moral compass. Consider also Susan, another defense lawyer who places a high value on fairness. Ignoring the advice of an advocacy group seeking to abolish the death penalty, Susan files an appeal on behalf of two death-row inmates. The advocacy group fears that the current justices on the court will rule unfavorably and uphold the sentence. Although both Susan and the advocacy group want to see the death penalty removed, Susan feels a primary responsibility to her clients to act swiftly even if a discouraging ruling could set back the cause. In our analysis, the stories of Gail, Susan and Linda each provoke reflection about how professionals should balance the needs of clients *vis-à-vis* their own personal needs and moral codes.

Generic and Widely-applicable Vignettes

Finally, a number of the Toolkit cases are readily applied *across the professions* and even to non-professions. These cases relate to the general execution of good work and its relation to the achievement of balance between the personal and professional.

One of these generic vignettes concerns a high school student named Rob. This student has been acting in school plays from a young age; he believes that this activity allows him to entertain an audience while fulfilling his deep personal passion to perform. Although Rob's father had previously been involved in acting himself, he seeks to forbid Rob from continuing to participate in dramatic productions at his school. Apparently, Rob's father wants him to focus instead on athletics and on lines of study that are more likely to result in a conventional career with more secure financial prospects.

Stressed by this pressure, Rob chooses to defy his father's wishes; he elects to live with his mother in order to continue acting. Returning to a distinction that we introduced earlier, Rob's case can be construed as tension between neighborly morality (doing what will please his father) and the ethics of roles (being true to the professional role about which you feel passionate). It can thus be likened to countless other narratives of workers across the professional landscape who must choose between the sincerely offered advice of loved ones and one's own sense of calling.

The Toolkit contains other cases that are sufficiently generic to be used for a wide variety of educational purposes. In one case drawn from the sciences, a graduate researcher dislikes the management style of her project supervisor. While the supervisor purports to encourage the growth of her student, she in fact has an overbearing managerial style, controlling nearly every aspect and direction of research and second-guessing the student's own carefully thought through decisions and priorities. Even though the student has tried to get along with her advisor and craves a positive mentorship, she comes to the conclusion that she must put her own growth and development first – even at the cost of breaking off the relationship with her adviser and possibly putting her career options at risk. Although this case takes place in a higher education scientific environment, the heart of the vignette is pertinent to all situations in which one must work with others in a difficult supervisor/subordinate association and still maintain focus on achieving good work.

In a final example, an ambitious young actress faces a difficult choice. Ideally she would like to be judged on her technical skills and understanding of acting, but she observes in her field the overwhelming importance placed on physical appearance. As a result, she contemplates plastic surgery in order to improve her chances of receiving lead roles. While the actress believes that it would be best if casting decisions were made on sheer ability and talent, she knows that other more superficial factors will be taken into consideration and could in fact be decisive. She struggles with the pressure she feels to go under the knife, as she does not want to violate her own self-respect in order to appease others. The vignette causes an audience to question the lengths to which one should go in order to secure a thriving career, whatever the field may be.

Summary

As presented, the GoodWork Toolkit contains a spectrum of cases, which can be arrayed in terms of their applicability across the professions. To be sure, even the cases most closely anchored to a particular profession can be related to general good work. Returning to the case of Carol, the journalist who quit her job in response to the hiring of a sensation-monger at her network, the central dilemma of the vignette places an individual's standards in opposition to developments in her profession. Expressed this way, the issue that Carol faces takes on a more universalistic color. Yet categorical groupings based on ease of applicability to

varied situations are useful for those who would draw on the Toolkit in a more targeted way.

6. USING GOODWORK MATERIALS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Until this point, we have described the organization of the Toolkit and the ways in which its vignettes can be categorized for groups drawn from the range of professions. We turn now to a brief account of some of the ways in which the Toolkit, as well as other materials drawn from our Project, have been employed and assessed in various educational settings. As a general strategy, rather than stipulating a precise setting and a specific approach within that setting for the materials that we have developed, we have preferred to respond to requests from different constituencies ‘on the ground’ and ‘in the field.’ Then, working in tandem with the requesters, we co-fashion approaches that show promise of being effective as well as develop appropriate means of assessment. While we thus do not dictate how the Toolkit is used, nor do we mandate a generic assessment approach, we describe here some venues where its utilization has had a positive outcome.

Use among High School and Elementary Students

The most common use of the Toolkit has come from collaborations with single teachers in individual classrooms, who employ the materials with their students in order to promote awareness of the features of good work. In one standard implementation, a teacher created a weekly ‘Day of Good Work’ for her three classes, during which students utilized the Toolkit as a group discussion tool. The GoodWork Project’s theories have also been introduced to entire school communities. Over the course of one school year, the GoodWork team partnered with a private school in the Boston area, specifically working on establishing alignment between stakeholder groups, namely students, faculty and parents. As a part of this collaboration, an introductory seminar for department heads as well as a faculty retreat and a student/parent retreat were held; teachers introduced the Toolkit into their classrooms; and multiple lectures on good work were given. Feedback to the programs was encouraging. The evening after the retreat, over 50 emails expressing support for the initiative were received, with a typical message from one faculty member stating: ‘The Good Work team’s message and issue seemed to resonate so strongly with everyone and were the basis for important discussions about values and choices that were meaningful and approachable for all’ (Barendsen and Fischman, 2007, p. 327).

Use among University Students

The Toolkit has been used in courses at a number of colleges and universities around the United States, including: a seminar series called ‘Meaningful Work for a Meaningful Life’ at Colby College; a freshman seminar at the University

of Maine, Farmington; a communications course at Colorado State University; and a humanities class at San Jose State University. At Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania, an initial partnership, with the goal of exploring and creating a culture of good work on campus, has grown to include a freshman orientation program that makes use of Toolkit vignettes and the incorporation of good work into several courses.

One piece of the Bloomsburg initiative involved 140 students in a course meant to assist the college transitions of students from financially, culturally, socially or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. At the beginning of the course, all students responded to an assignment in which they described what it meant to do good work in college. Subsequently, one-half of the class (70 individuals) was randomly assigned to an experimental group that participated in small discussion sections for six weeks on topics such as ethical behavior, role-models and the three E's of GoodWork; the other one-half of the students did not. A post-program assessment revealed that students assigned to the discussion groups, unlike their peers who were not, had begun to incorporate considerations of ethics into their conceptions of carrying out good work (Miller *et al.*, 2012). Bloomsburg has also carried out an extensive profession-specific appraisal of good work in nursing (Pennsylvania Nurses Association, 2013).

Additionally, for a decade, Howard Gardner has taught a class called 'Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet' at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. At the beginning of the semester, students are provided with a vignette in which they are instructed to examine the situation from the perspective of both the main actor and a disinterested observer. A matching exercise is administered at the end of the term. Blind scoring of the students' responses reveals an enhanced sensitivity at the end of the course to how individuals perceive ethical dilemmas and the considerations on which they draw in resolving the dilemmas (Barendsen and Fischman, in press).

Use with Teachers in a Network of Schools

In a very different application, we have recently partnered with the Global Education & Leadership Foundation (tGELF), an organization that works with over 40 schools in India and Bhutan. The goal of tGELF is to shape students to become ethical leaders. So far, the GoodWork team has participated in regular presentations and video conferences with the leadership at tGELF, which has been very receptive to the GoodWork Project's ideas. We have also conducted a series of seminars, termed the GoodWork Certification Course, in which approximately 35 tGELF schoolteachers have been introduced to the GoodWork Project and Toolkit with the goal of becoming ambassadors of good work in their schools. As a result, teachers seemed to become more sensitive to good work issues and incorporated these issues into their lessons when working with students. In one classroom, for example, a teacher conducted brainstorming sessions for his students about good work and then asked them to discuss times when they faced

their own ethical dilemmas similar to Toolkit vignettes. Another teacher organized a good work information meeting for parents and encouraged them to ‘nurture children with strong ethics,’ thereby extending good work approaches beyond the classroom (Kim, 2012). A third teacher, who had used the Toolkit in her classes, noted an expansion in students’ ‘sphere of responsibility,’ moving beyond responsibility to friends to include the school and society as a whole (Kim, 2012). The collaboration with tGELF has resulted in several original applications involving diverse groups of students and teachers reporting positive results in these classroom exercises.

Use in Professional Education

Finally, in a related project that anticipated the Toolkit, William Damon and colleagues partnered in the late 1990s with two organizations, the Committee for Concerned Journalists and the Project for Excellence in Journalism, to form the Travelling Curriculum for journalists (Bronk, 2010). The Travelling Curriculum was created in response to the rapid changes occurring in journalism with the rise of digital technology, specifically the Internet. In light of these changes, Damon and associates saw a need to educate journalists about how best to sustain the fundamental values of journalism in this changed environment.

The Travelling Curriculum is a day-and-a-half-long workshop that can be used in any journalistic setting. The workshop is made up of three modules selected from an inventory, each of which focuses on a certain challenge that journalists face in their work; for example, modules focus on topics such as ‘bias’ or ‘accuracy and verification.’ The curriculum has been used in hundreds of newsrooms across different media platforms with much success. Reviews have found that journalists both enjoy the sessions and benefit from them, as the workshops afford an opportunity in a fast-paced career for individual reporters to step back and reflect on professional engagement and to discuss these reflections with colleagues (Damon and Mueller, 2006).

7. CONCLUSION

The GoodWork Project, which we have recently expanded into The Good Project, is now approaching its twentieth anniversary. When we began the project, we were uncertain about its goals, the means of achieving them and the nature of the findings that would ultimately emerge. We had even less of a notion that the findings of this empirical project in the social sciences would eventually give rise to a series of applications, both in traditional educational settings and in various collections of workers across several professions.

In this synthetic essay, we have sought to recapitulate our journey. Drawing on past work, we briefly reviewed the relevant background research, our own goals, methods and principal findings, and the decision to attempt to foster good work in various settings. Then, after introducing our principal vehicle – the GoodWork

Toolkit – we presented two new lines of work: a classification of Good Work vignettes in terms of their degree of generality; and a review of approaches and initial findings across a number of educational settings. Rather than stipulating that the Toolkit be used in specific settings for specific purposes, we instead have responded to requests ‘from the field’ and worked with the requesters to devise means of implementing the materials and assessing their effectiveness. We have reported preliminary results from a number of applications; going forward, we anticipate more rigorous and more generic assessments.

The rationale underpinning all of the applications of the GoodWork Project is that individuals are unlikely to learn to be ethical simply by consulting a book or thinking on their own. Required is a much deeper analysis that entails soul-searching, discussing with peers, hearing the thoughts of others, recognizing mistakes and committing to continual personal improvement. Although we do not claim to have all the answers, the Toolkit and other materials are our attempt to strengthen ethical awareness and commitment.

We live at a time of rapid change, a time of impatience with any work that does not immediately yield products, or what have come to be termed ‘deliverables.’ Whatever the utility of this stance in certain sectors of society, we believe it to be counterproductive in the area of scholarly research and its applications. Albert Einstein famously quipped: ‘Everything should be made as simple as possible but not simpler.’ Following the spirit of this remark, we believe that it would not have been possible to rush headlong into our current efforts to promulgate and apply findings from the GoodWork study. It is up to others to judge whether this work enables students and workers to think more judiciously about the dilemmas that arise at the workplace and, ultimately, to act in ways that are excellent, engaging and ethical. We are confident, however, that such efforts in the future can benefit from a careful examination of the lines of study and application described in this paper.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to the funders who have supported the GoodWork Project over the years. The Christian Johnson Endeavor Foundation has been the steadfast supporter and the authors owe an incalculable debt to its President, Julie Kidd, and to Susan Kassouf, Special Project Director. For their groundbreaking work over the years and their help with this paper, the authors thank Lynn Barendsen and Wendy Fischman. James Arthur provided valuable suggestions on an earlier draft.

9. NOTE

¹ See <http://thegoodproject.org>.

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